

# Religious Enquirer.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.—ISAIAH 1. 18.

EDITED BY REV. RICHARD CARRIQUE.—HARTFORD, CONN. J. RUSSELL, PRINTER.

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[VOL. I.—NO. IX.

*From the N. Y. Gospel Herald.*

## AN APPEAL TO THE WORLD.

[Continued from page 57.]

### THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION ILLUSTRATED.

The calling of Saul of Tarsus, to the apostleship, is a farther illustration of this truth. Acts ix. 15. “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me. (What is he chosen to? or elected for?) to bear my name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the children of Israel.” Not elected to heaven, to the exclusion of others; but to preach to Jew and Gentile, whether elect or non-elect!

This subject is farther illustrated by Paul, who preached in clear and expressive terms, the *purpose* of God, in his Epistles to the Romans and to the Ephesians. Rom. viii. 28. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that are called according to his purpose.” Do all things work together for good to them who are called according to Calvin’s purpose? Reader, are you a father or a mother? is it good in your estimation, to know that your children are to groan in endless, and inexpressible wretchedness? If you call this good, what, we ask, do you call bad? Paul continues—“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” What is the image of the Son? Col. iii. 10, 11. “And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, (I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ. 1 Cor. xi. iii.) after the image of him that created him; (‘God is Love’) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all!” Search creation through, and a contrast cannot be produced, so great and palpable as the contrast here presented to our view, between the glorious purpose of God, and the heart-withering doctrines of Calvinism! The facts are too notorious to need exemplification. How often are our ears assailed with the dogma of personal holiness—our feelings outraged to hear that holiness defined, and a hardness of heart, and insensibility boasted of, which would blacken, with fresh odium, the characters of Nero and Caligula? Reader, you shall be the evidence in this case. You shall witness to the many declarations which have fallen from the lips of Calvin’s and Hopkin’s disciples—their acknowledgments that their own children and dearest relatives, friends, and connections, will be endlessly excluded from heaven and from happiness—that they viewed this exclusion, and this misery with perfect calmness—calmness, did I say? Nay, that the time was coming, when they would sound the loud Amen to the undiscriminable torments of the children of their own body, and thank and praise God, and shout for their interminable damnation. Let recollection be faithful to her trust. Let memory, the sentinel of your observation, sound the alarm, while you view, in all their blackness, the reiterated asseverations of these worshippers at Calvin’s shrine! Look, then, at the following. Read it, as you would read a *pardon* when death stood at the portal; and treasure it up in your remembrance, as you would treasure the truths of Heaven! “Put on, therefore, as the ELECT of God, holy and beloved, BOWELS OF MERCIES, KINDNESS, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, &c. Reader, if you are a

Calvinist, or a Hopkinsian, answer—Do you “put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of MERCIES, KINDNESS,” &c. when you declare that you will sound the loud Amen to the endless misery of your children and dearest connections? If you answer Yes! Please to inform me what kind of an Amen you would sound, if you were to put on *bowels of cruelties and hatred*? If I were your child, I should prefer your *cruelty and hatred* to your *bowels of mercies and kindness*. If you consign your friends to endless wretchedness, when you are *merciful and kind*, heaven only knows what you would do in another frame of mind! Worse you could not do. If there were any change in your disposition, it would, of necessity, be for the better!!!

N. B. Christ died for his enemies. Rom. v. 7, 8. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His Love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

[To be continued.]

## COMMUNICATIONS.

### FOR THE INQUIRER.

*Mr. Editor,*

I sent you some weeks since, an extract from the 5th letter of a Unitarian of Baltimore, to the Rev. Dr. Miller. I now send you two other extracts, from the same letter; and it seems the writer (who is generally believed to be Rev. Jared Sparks) supposes that he is not an Universalist, because he believes in a future state of retribution. He says, “The doctrine of Universal Salvation is in very close accordance with high Calvinistic principles. If you take away the notion of election and reprobation, it becomes a necessary part of the system which remains. If Christ has made an atonement for the sins of the whole world, or in other words, if his sufferings were taken as a substitute for the sins of men, his righteousness being imputed to them and their sins to him, it follows, that all men will attain salvation through him. The benefits of his substitution cannot be restricted, because, according to the Calvinistic plan, he was, in your own language, an ‘Almighty Surety.’ Calvinism in the first place, makes all men so deplorably wicked, from the very constitution of their nature, as justly to consign them in a mass to everlasting perdition; and then to rescue them from this state, it resorts to the sufferings and death of an Almighty Being, as the only means of removing so great an evil.”

The fore part of this extract the Rev. Gentleman gives for Universalism. The writings and preaching of those who now defend Universal Salvation I do not understand so, and it is unfair for him to go back to those, who had but just got off their grave clothes, to give an exposition of Universalism. Here follows the other extract.

“What is the foundation of that love of God, which is the first and greatest duty of Christians? Does it not exist in those excellencies of his character, which shine forth in his benevolence, his mercy, his paternal kindness, and unbounded love for us? But how can you reconcile these attributes with the idea of his having doomed a certain number of his creatures to an endless misery, a state and degree of suffering, which bear no proportion to any amount of crimes, that a finite and frail being is capable of committing? Does not this doctrine, viewed thus abstractly, take from the Deity every thing that is amiable,

and lovely, and affectionate? Can you look up to such a being with that filial reverence and holy gratitude, with that perfect trust, and hope, and confidence, which the scriptures demand towards God, as the kind Father, protector, and righteous judge of men?

"Admitting the doctrine to be true, which teaches, that all the wicked will be punished hereafter by an awful and indescribable visitation of God's displeasure, but at the same time, in proportion to the deserts of every individual, till at length they shall all be purified and fitted for the employments and happiness of heaven, and be made to act an important part, through all future ages, in celebrating the praises and advancing the glory of God,—I say, admitting this doctrine to be true, does it not exhibit the Deity in a more exalted and engaging light, than the other doctrine, and under such a character, that the soul can with more freedom and fervour, express towards him its emotions of piety, and love, and as will enable all men to discharge with greater sincerity and confidence the duties springing out of the relation in which they stand to their Maker? This will hardly be denied; and if not, it follows most clearly, that the *moral influence* of this doctrine is more efficacious, than that of the other, in drawing us to a proper love and devout service of the Supreme Being." Our author says, "admitting this to be true," i. e. the restoration of all men; now why cannot Unitarians either take the ground of the restoration, or support the doctrine of endless misery? The fact is, they are unwilling to do either; and in doing as they do, they manifest a degree of hypocrisy I am very sorry to lay to their charge.

W.

#### FOR THE INQUIRER. RELIGIOUS REVIVALS.

By an examination of Ecclesiastical Reports it will appear that religious revivals almost always occur during the winter season; especially after some severe visitation of Providence. The sticklers for these revivals, ascribe the whole process of regeneration, conviction, conversion, and even repentance to the *special agency* of the *Holy Spirit*. I am not, however, disposed to ascribe effects to supernatural causes, while the *physical* are within the sphere of every man's vision, who is not blinded by ignorance, superstition, and enthusiasm. How far the gloom of winter, together with the leisure which accompanies it, facilitate the operations of the *Holy Spirit*, I shall leave to the decision of those who are versed in the doctrine of mystery. But there are strong reasons for believing that gloominess and leisure have some considerable influence in producing religious revivals.

The present season, however, has thus far passed by without any particular awakenings in this vicinity, which may be easily accounted for.

During the last winter, revivals were all the

fashion; most all the youth and the inexperienced felt more or less of their influence, and fancied themselves the *peculiar favorites* of heaven. Of course, another stock of the same genus must appear on the stage, before another revival can occur. It would perhaps be as well not to notice these enthusiasts, were it not that the noble mind revolts at every species of imposition and delusion; and that those bigots pronounce all to be infidels who do not work themselves up to the same crisis of frenzy and enthusiasm. They seem to forget or disregard the high authority which admonishes to "judge not, that ye be not judged." The managers of these revivals, use every exertion to excite the passions and alarm the fears; in proof of which, I will give an outline of their doctrines and proceeding.

This is a special time of grace,  
God's mercy soon will leave the place:  
If you should not repent this night,  
You'll be in hell ere morning light.—  
Thou' God did all predestinate,  
Yet now's a time for reprobate;  
For all may come of ev'ry sect,  
Yet, none can come except th' Elect.

One would suppose that a mind inflated with such absurdities and contradictions, would have a great sufficiency to digest for one or two days at least. But instead of this, conferences are multiplied to ten or fifteen per week—religious visits are made morning, noon, and night.—And lest the operation of the Spirit should prove ineffectual, anxious or whispering meetings are appointed at sun-rise or before, and the trembling audience are desired to retire in sullen silence, and to call again in the morning for a fresh dose of the same efficacious medicine. It is well known that certain medicines when taken upon an empty stomach, especially in copious quantities, have a tendency to excite the passions and exhilarate the spirits, without producing any salutary influence upon the body.

So those doctrines which alarm the fears, awaken the sympathy, and excite a feverish zeal, have no tendency to improve the heart or to convince the understanding. Those anxious souls, after searching for the truth blindfold; after a few more anxious meetings, and after grieving and brooding over their forlorn case for a while, all on a sudden become tranquil, as one relieved from violent pain or delirium, and flatter themselves that they are regenerated; or they run into melancholy, madness, and despair. The former are then admitted into the Church, and the latter will soon be received into the Insane Hospital\* which is preparing for their reception. There is nothing perhaps so imperfectly understood, as the ope-

\* By the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the number and condition of the insane—a goodly number will be found in all those towns which have lately been visited with revivals.

rations of the human intellect and passions. Men of the greatest science are not agreed upon the subject of volition, or freedom of the will. We seem to be free and must conclude ourselves free to *will* and to *do*, or the ground of responsibility is destroyed. We are endowed with a number of latent passions, which are only excited into action by a peculiar combination of causes : these, as they operate on the unreflecting multitude, are by them supposed to be the salutary operations of the Holy Spirit. But *prejudice, ignorance, superstition, pride and fashion*, have their weight in controlling human actions, notwithstanding so much is ascribed to the *effacious influence of supernatural causes*. The peculiar feeling produced by hearing a lucid description of the wrath of God, the nearness and certainty of death, and the everlasting torments of hell, cannot be attributed to the strivings of the Holy Spirit, without doing violence to the freedom and principles of the mind. Whoever has observed, without prejudice, the *rise, progress and termination of religious revivals*, will discover *physical causes* to account for every effect, without having recourse to supernatural agency. The conduct of those who have passed through the regenerating ordeal, after their enthusiasm has an opportunity of cooling down to the zero of reflection and reason, is convincing testimony of the truth of the above position.—Judging by the excellent standard laid down by our Saviour—“*by their fruits,*” we shall find it difficult to distinguish those who pretend to be under the influence of the good spirit, from those who are governed by morality. Is it possible to ascribe religious revivals to the special agency of omnipotent power, and our free agency not be effected, and the God of all justice and mercy remain impartial ? All are not successfully operated upon in this manner, and can it be said that such resist its influence ? Let us remember *not* to ascribe omnipotent power to the *creature*, for this belongs exclusively to JEHOVAH.

S.

#### AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “ INQUIRER.”

Dear Sir—In all important concerns and institutions, there are certain principles of action, as well as actions themselves, that tend to one common centre, as an ulterior object. This object in general, is only attainable by the co-exertion of many, whether it be good or bad, or whatever might have been its origination. From the very principles of our nature, we feel strongly inclined and from the freedom of our civil institutions, fully authorized to examine such institutions, whether civil, pecuniary or religious, as may be supposed to influence either the public mind or morals ; or for the support and encouragement of which, we may be called upon for aid. Such, however, is the state of things among us, that very extensive and monied institutions among us,

possessing extensive means and influence and deriving their resources from the bignesses of community, pass upon the world without inspection. This remissness of public scrutiny, is to be traced to a fancied security, produced by appearances ostensibly good, and to the inherent propensity of believing every thing laudable and virtuous, which is clothed with the vestments of piety and religion.

Most of the petty associations which prey upon a credulous community, being the productions of a too fervid zeal, will gently pass down to oblivion, with the *passions* that gave them existence. But it will not be so, it is feared, with some of a more general, and more imposing character. Of the latter kind, the “ AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY” certainly holds the first rank. This society evidently owes its existence, not to the transient reveries of speculative enthusiasts ; but is the well-proportioned production of systematic contrivance, and mature deliberation. Its avowed plan is imposing, and commands respect—Its ostensible objects, such as insure confidence, and excite liberality, in all who know the wants of the indigent, or can feel for the destitute and the ignorant. Hence the liberal donations, that have given a plenitude to its funds almost beyond example. What the real objects of its founders and managers are, the writer of this article is not disposed to say ; but an impartial survey of some of its proceedings and management, must satisfy every candid mind, what they have *not* in view.—The gratuitous dissemination of the scriptures is announced as its design ; and for the effecting of this, continual calls are made on the community for donations. The monthly receipts and expenditures are regularly published, and average about \$4000 each month—Thus impressing upon the public mind the idea that nothing, or at most, a mere trifle, remains in the hands of the association. Thus far, appearances favor the institution. Keeping in mind, that the gratuitous bestowment of the scriptures to the poor, is the professed object of the society ; it only remains that we inquire as to the propriety of the *kind of impressions*, and the manner of their distribution.

First, *The impression of the Bible*. Where money is placed in the hands of an individual for a given object, the person or persons making the trust, have a right to expect prudence in its application. For instance, five individuals make a joint donation, for the purpose of giving a comfortable suit of clothes, to a very indigent neighbor ; and appoint one of their number to procure the articles and confer the gift ; at the same time reserving, for the benefit of another distressed person, the balance that might remain in the hands of the agent. Now suppose, instead of procuring a decent and comfortable suit, he should purchase the most fashionable and richest stuffs, and thus pervert and frustrate the benevolent intentions of four-fifths of the donors ; would they not, if they

were really benevolent, say to him in the language of Jesus—"Thou mayest be no longer steward?" View then, the fine Bibles emitted by the American Bible Society, and you will at once perceive not only the application of the foregoing, but its reality. Bibles abound in our country, emitted by that society, *the first cost of which, is asserted by its agents to be three dollars each*; while others, from the same source, containing all the canonical books, cost in the first instance but sixty-two and a half cents. Will it be said, that the truths contained in a handsome quarto, or royal octavo Bible, are of more importance to man, than the same truths on a different quality of paper? If not, why not print the latter kind, and thus dispense nearly five times as many? The poor, such as feel their inability to purchase a Bible, would feel the same obligation for, and be equally benefitted by the latter as the former—Nothing can be more obvious than that the real objects of christian benevolence, would be better promoted, than has yet been realized, by distributing the cheaper kind of Bibles—unless, indeed, the more costly ones were intended for the fashionable and wealthy; but the fashionable ought to be able to purchase a Bible to their taste, and the rich certainly are so. If then the cause of humanity and religion, be not best promoted by the practice of emitting costly Bibles, and by the impression of *such*, it is evident the means existed for the impression of a greater number of a different kind; then it follows, that the want of a more general diffusion of the Bible to the poor, is to be traced, not to any deficiency of means, but to a want of intention. Consequently, the giving of the scriptures to the poor, is *not* the real and primary intention of the American Bible Society.

Secondly—*The manner of distributing Bibles.* By an attention to this part of the subject, the correctness of the preceding conclusion will appear still more obvious and necessary. Bibles are deposited for distribution in many sections of the country—often with book-sellers. Here persons calling for that invaluable book, unsuspectingly purchase these very Bibles, which a credulous public have enabled the society to publish—sometimes at a high per centum on the prime cost—at other times by paying only the cost of impression, and if it is discovered that nothing short of giving will do, they are even given to such as "have nothing to pay." Now by this process of retailing, the following inferences seem unavoidable. The retailer secures his profits—the society secures a premium on the sales, that indemnifies itself for its gratuities to the poor—the sales at first cost still support the press, and constitute the fund whence the monthly emissions are made, and the society gains the whole that is donated from time to time, amounting nearly or quite, to \$48,000 annually. By this mode of distribution, an immense fund is thrown into the hands of a few individuals; and is

necessarily at their exclusive disposal. Deposited in the Banks, many of which are under the immediate inspection and management of devoted friends of the institution; many whose purses have perhaps been emptied in contributions to the society, unknown to themselves, *pay banking interest* to the association on that very fund, which their own bounty had been instrumental in creating.

It may now be asked whether the society have any intention to sell its Bibles? If it has not, why is not the selling of them prevented? As they have been, and continue to be sold, it is perfectly plain it intends to sell them; and therefore, does not intend to give them away, and consequently, it is equally plain, that the intentions of the American Bible Society, were not simply to give the Bible to the poor.

Having, it is believed, indisputably shown what are not the intentions of the American Bible Society, it remains for the community to ascertain what are its objects—a subject that has, and hereafter will receive due attention from

MARCUS.

#### FOR THE INQUIRER.

If I were a believer in the doctrine of Universal salvation, says a disciple of Calvin, I should not fear to practice every species of vice. O thou deluded mortal! wert thou not a professor of the heavenly religion of Jesus, it would not so much astonish me. Dear brother, whoever thou art, I assure thee that more demonstrative evidence cannot be given, that thou art a stranger to this amiable religion. The nature and design of this blessed religion thou must be ignorant of, if thou expressed thyself thus. Thou knowest not the character of thy creator God, that character which, from its nature, renders him happy in the superlative degree, and that the nearer his creature man, assimilates unto this character, by the cultivation of the divine principle with which he is blessed, in the same proportion will be the increase of his happiness. Remember it is said, "none are so blind as those who will not see." If the sun, in its meridian splendour, is not seen by thee, because thou closest thine eyes, say not that darkness reigns. Dispossess thyself of thy obstinacy and delusions, and anoint thine eyes with that heavenly eye-salve which will open thy intellectual vision, and give thee a clearer perception of things that appertain to thy happiness. I invite thee for a few moments, to ponder upon this subject, and see the inseparable connexion between cause and effect. Look at the nature of vice and see its deformity, and the awful consequence attending its indulgence, and see if thou art not deluded. Thou sayest that thou wouldest murder wert thou not afraid of being consigned to eternal woe! Dear brother, wilt thou first sit down, reflect and look at the consequence: suppose thou couldst lay thy plans with such crafti-

ness as to think it impossible to be detected by human laws, dost thou think that the curse of thy crime would not pursue thee, and produce continual fear? That the worm which dieth not, and the fire of thy conscience, would not torment thee day and night? Wilt thou say thou couldst enjoy that serene and happy temper of mind, that the man does who walketh uprightly, who loves his God, and believes that his God loves all men? Thou wouldest rob and steal, wert thou not afraid of eternal misery! I again ask thee to reflect: suppose thou shouldst succeed in an attempt at robbery, or in stealing some desirable object, and not be detected, wouldest thou not be in continual fear that thy crimes would finally be found out, and thy conduct exposed? The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion. Thou wouldest lie and deceive, wert thou not afraid of endless misery! Look for a moment upon this character, in whom no confidence can be placed—not to be believed when he speaks the truth—of no reputation, and who is prohibited the benefit of that testimony, (even in the maintenance of just rights) to which men of truth are entitled. O deluded man! is this a character pleasing to thee? If thou desirest still to pursue the road to destruction, go to the slothful, whose time is lost in idleness, and ask him if his hours do not drag heavily along, and see if the want of exercise has not diseased his body? Idleness is the parent of want and pain; but the hand of diligence defeateth want; prosperity and success are the industrious man's attendants. The diligent shall rule, and the idle and slothful shall pay tribute and suffer hunger. Look at the farm of the sluggard; see it grown over with weeds, his fences prostrate; his house out of repair; himself and family clothed in rags, and his constant visitor the sheriff! If intemperance and voluptuousness have any allurements for thee, go to the dram shop and see the slow poison dealt out to the poor trembling mortal who visits there; from thence go with him to the place of his abode; see the poor innocent children crying for bread; the dejected countenance of the amiable and once beautiful female who is bound to this wretched man for life—her heart wrung with anguish, and tears trickling down her cheeks—you behold him the victim of intemperance, full of abusive language, and degraded below the brute creation. Wouldst thou exchange thy situation for this man's?

(To be continued.)

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FOR THE INQUIRER.

*Of the explication of the Scriptures.*

NO V.

(Continued from page 46.)

In our last number, it was observed that the principal source of misapprehension, error, and absurd and chimerical doctrines, was the practice

of considering the different passages, parables, maxims and sayings of the scriptures, in a separate and isolated point of view, and entirely disregarding the general objects and requirements of the scriptures. If the general objects and requirements of the scriptures, both as to faith and practice, are plain and obvious, so much so that they cannot be mistaken, what occasion is there to trouble ourselves as to the import of particular ambiguous words or passages? Is it to be supposed that a particular text contains truths contrary to the general character of the scriptures? Are they not consistent, or are particular parts of the scriptures opposed to their general character? This, if true, will destroy the divine authority of revelation, as God cannot be charged with inconsistency. If any text or passage is apparently inconsistent with the general character, objects and requirements of the scriptures, it follows that some error has crept into the text, or that we do not understand it in its proper sense. No principles of faith can be established upon the authority of particular texts, which do not comport with the general character and views of the scriptures, as this would be rendering them inconsistent.

We have hitherto spoken of revelation as tho' it was originally communicated in the language in which we now have the privilege of reading it. And in the view which we have taken of the subject, looking only to the general character and requirements of the scriptures, it cannot be necessary to go into a more particular or critical examination of the sacred volume. Although the text has undoubtedly been subjected to many corruptions, and although the learned cannot agree as to the authority of the ancient manuscripts, or as to the true version; yet it cannot be doubted that the character and spirit of the original communication is preserved with so much purity and correctness, as to leave no doubt as to its general character, requirements, and obligations. But the danger and impropriety of establishing dogmas and points of faith, not consistent with the general views of the scriptures, and not clearly taught therein, upon the authority of a particular word or text, are greatly increased from the consideration that the *language* of scripture is not a revelation from God. This is not only true of the different translations, but of the original, as all the ancient manuscript copies of the New-Testament differ more or less, and no one possesses such characteristic marks of genuineness as to entitle it to a decided preference. That I am correct in these remarks, the writings both of the ancient fathers and modern divines, fully testify. In the early ages of the church, many spurious and apocryphal gospels, and other books of the New-Testament, were in use. Theodoret says he removed about two hundred gospels from the public churches, because they wanted the genealogy of Christ, and put others in their place. Iræneus, in speaking of the primitive forgeries, says "that

in order to amaze the simple and such as are ignorant of the scriptures of truth, they obtruded upon them an inexpressible multitude of apochryphal and spurious scriptures, of their own devising." And Origen, so early as the third century, seriously complains of these corrupt practices.— "What shall we say, (he observes,) of the errors of transcribers and of the impious temerity with which they have corrupted the text? What shall we say of the license of those who promiscuously interpolate or erase at pleasure?"

But we have a more full view of this subject in a work recently published by Bishop Marsh, professor of divinity at Cambridge, in England, entitled "Courses of Lectures on Divinity." He informs us that the "Greek manuscripts of St. Paul's Epistles amount, as far as we know them, to more than *one hundred and fifty*; and the Greek manuscripts of the Gospel, with which we are acquainted, amount to more than *three hundred and fifty*. But among all these manuscripts, there is none which is so far entitled to precedence as to be received for the true copy of which we are in search. In fact, the truth lies scattered among them all, and in order to obtain the truth, we must gather from them all. Nor is an examination of these manuscripts, numerous as they are, alone, sufficient for the object we have in view. The quotations of the Greek Testament, in the voluminous writings of the Greek fathers, must likewise be examined, that we may know what they found in their Greek manuscripts. The ancient versions may also be consulted, in order to learn what the writers of these versions found in their copies of the Greek Testament. When all these collections from manuscripts, fathers and versions, have been formed and reduced into proper order, we have then to determine in every *singl einstance*, which, among the *various* readings, is, *probably*, the genuine reading."

Such, according to this learned Doctor of Divinity, is the difficulty in getting at the true reading of the scriptures. The ancient Greek manuscripts, of which there are three hundred and fifty of the gospels preserved, all differ; and from the writings of the fathers, it appears, that they had other manuscripts from which they have made extracts, which differed from all these; and no one of this whole collection, is entitled to precedence. The true reading can only be ascertained by an examination of all these ancient manuscript copies, and the writings and quotations of the Greek fathers; and after all it is more or less uncertain, as it is what the learned cannot agree in.

In speaking of the causes of the difference in the ancient copies, the Bishop says, "the manuscripts of the Greek Testament, during the fourteen hundred years which elapsed from the apostolic age, to the invention of printing, were exposed like other manuscripts, to mistakes in trans-

cribing; and as every copy had, unavoidably, some errors, those errors multiplied with the multiplication of copies. Letters, syllables, and words were added, omitted, or transposed, from mere carelessness. But the grossest variations were from alterations made by *design*. The transcribers of the Greek Testament, often took the liberty of *improving*, as they supposed, on that manuscript of which it was their business to give only a copy; a liberty similar to that which is now taken in a printing-office, where a compositor often improves on the manuscript of an author.

"But the most fruitful source of designed alterations, was the removal of marginal annotations into the text. Indeed, to this cause may be ascribed the alterations from parallel passages, whenever these parallel passages had been written in the margin. Other marginal notes consisted of explanations, or applications of the adjacent text; and when a manuscript with such notes fell into the hands of a transcriber, he either supposed that they were parts of the text, accidentally omitted, and supplied in the margin, or considered them as useful *additions*, which there could be no harm in adopting."

In the opinion of this learned and orthodox divine, so numerous and serious are the difficulties of ascertaining the true reading of the scriptures, and after all the learning and industry which can be bestowed upon the subject, you only attain to the "*probable genuine reading*." It is a great mistake to suppose that the *language* of scripture forms a part of divine revelation; it is only the subject matter that is from God; the language is human, and subject to all the imperfections and corruption that language is subject to in other cases. How absurd then, to establish the principles and dogmas of religion upon nice points of verbal criticism! Yet the doctrine of the eternity of punishment rests upon no better foundation; it wholly depends upon the use and import of a single Greek word. Is it so trifling a concern whether a large portion of the human race shall be eternally miserable or not, that it was left to depend upon a point of verbal criticism? This is impeaching the character of God. If any portion of his creatures were exposed to eternal misery, justice requires that they should be informed of it in a manner so clear and explicit, that they could not mistake, as to the awful situation in which they were placed.

TRENCHARD.

## Religious Inquirer.

HARTFORD, SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 1822.

### CHRISTIAN SECRETARY.

It was with much pleasure we read the following extract, in the Secretary of February 9th.

"As the spirit of missions unites itself with inward devotion, and as it burns in the hearts of Christians at the present day with unprecedented

ardour, there is also much need of circumspection in regard to this subject. It is to be feared that some who feel a real desire to awaken all around them to activity in the cause, have used exhortations calculated to leave the formalist to rest on his liberality for acceptance with God. A warranted duty is not to be enforced by unwarranted motives; nor is it enough, that we do not promise support in death, and final salvation as the sure reward for giving in this cause; the carnal mind is ever ready to rest on its own merits, and those who know the insufficiency of all righteousness but that of Jesus Christ, should be careful to correct the delusions of the deceitful heart."

By this it appears that our brother Editor is well persuaded, that improper means have been used, to obtain money in aid of Missions, by making promises of support in death, and final salvation as the sure reward for giving in this cause. We are happy to find, that independent honesty, and PIETY in our brother, which has induced him to discountenance such proceedings.

Whoever will carefully look at those publications, designed to stimulate people to contribute for the support of Missions, will find promises held out, which have done violence to the word of truth, and are every way calculated to lead the mind from that HOPE, which is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. They will find, that those zealous advocates for missions, by holding out the reward of eternal life, or an antidote to an accusing conscience in the hour of death, for their liberality in giving money, &c. have actually trodden under foot the Son of God, have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the spirit of grace. We feel persuaded the time is not far distant, when they will be ashamed of the measures they have taken to wring money from the hand of the industrious poor, by working upon their credulity, and religious feelings.

With much pleasure we agree with our brother Editor, that nothing but the righteousness of Jesus Christ ought to be exhibited, as the ground of justification, and we feel as fully persuaded as he does, "that the carnal mind is ever ready to rest on its own merits." This is clearly discernible in that religious pride, which causes many to separate themselves from others, to consider themselves as the peculiar chosen favorites of heaven, and to apply to themselves exclusively, the appellation of "RIGHTEOUS." Were mankind faithfully taught that SALVATION is of God, and not according to their works—that there is no merit in them, on which they could rely for eternal felicity, and that all are saved by the GRACE and MERCY of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, it would have a tendency to humble them, and induce them to throw down those middle walls of partition, which the ingenuity of man has erected, and daubed with untempered mortar, and they would be

willing to unite with those, who rely alone on the righteousness of Christ for salvation.

But while we rejoice that our brother Editor has candidly expressed his disapprobation of the means, which have been used to obtain aid in the cause of missions, (which he has done, to be sure, with a good deal of delicacy and caution,) we feel it our duty to notice the following expression, which we must believe was made without due reflection.

"Inconsiderateness on these subjects is to be deprecated, not only because it gratifies those whose vitiated appetites seek to feed on the christian's imperfections, but also because the christian professes to square all his words and actions by the truth of God."

We ask on what subjects is this INCONSIDERATENESS to be deprecated? The promising support in death, and final salvation, for giving in the missionary cause.—But why this caution? "Because it gratifies those, whose VITIATED APPETITES, seek to feed on the christian imperfections." If we can understand language, the amount of the above sentence is this,—Should a person behold those who style themselves christians, zealously engaged in obtaining Fields, Money, Produce, and articles of Manufacture, for missionary purposes, by means which he considers inconsistent with the truth of God, and calculated to lead the mind from Him, who is the way, the truth, and the life, by promising them an antidote to an accusing conscience on the bed of death, in the reflection of having given a FIELD for missionary purposes—or "FINAL SALVATION," for giving money, &c. or driving people, through fear of being disrespected, despised, and called INFIDELS, if they do not aid the cause of missions; and should be independent enough to caution the public against the imposition, point out the wickedness and impropriety of such proceedings, and put people upon their guard against all such improper, if not impious violations of the system of salvation, he would be considered as giving strong evidence of a vitiated appetite, that is gratified by feeding on the imperfections of christians. If this is correct evidence of a vitiated mind, then it will follow as a matter of course, that he who should behold these improper and fraudulent practices, and should keep them buried in the depths of secrecy, and suffer people not only to be drained of their money, and their minds led away from the pure principles of the gospel, their God dishonored, and their Redeemer robbed of his glory, would give full evidence of a healthful appetite. This being the case, we are not surprised, that while our brother found it necessary in the honesty of his heart, to reprobate, or at least to caution professors of religion, against such improprieties, he should touch them with such extreme caution, lest he should be considered, by men of refined taste, as giving evidence of a vitiated appetite, notwithstanding the christian PROFESSS,

and according to this profession, ought to square all his words and actions by the truth of God.

It is customary with professors of religion, to attribute revivals to God, and to consider them as the work of the Holy spirit. Hence, when a revival commences at any place, it is said, God is there; but when the revival declines, it is said, God is about to leave the place. Now if these awakenings are the work of God, we inquire whether the Almighty commences this work, according to his own divine will and sovereign pleasure, or, whether he is induced to commence the work, at the suggestion or will of professors of religion? This inquiry results from a review of a somewhat singular circumstance, related by a gentleman of respectability, who is ready to vouch for the truth of it. One of those **LAY PREACHERS**, who are much employed of late, to run from town to town, and from house to house, like the ancient order of **JESUIT**s, working upon the mind and feelings of the weak and ignorant, recently visited the town of North Branford, in this state, to hold a conference, and produce if possible an awakening. After holding forth some time with a good deal of zeal, setting forth eternal, never ending misery with all its horrors, finding he was not likely to effect much, he began to suggest the propriety of having a revival, and at length put it to **VOTE**, to see whether they would have one. Some of the good people began to rise, some seemed to hesitate, got half up, and then sat down again; however, enough arose to constitute a major vote, "**THAT THEY WOULD HAVE A REVIVAL.**" If this work be of God, this procedure manifests the height of ignorance, and unpardonable presumption. It can hardly be possible, that any one can suppose that such decisions can compel the **DEITY** to act, whether it is his will or not.

Such proceedings must in time open the eyes of mankind, and they will discover the whole design, end, and aim of the clergy in these awakenings; the instruments they are making use of to produce them, having neither wisdom or experience to manage the business adroitly, will make such blunders as to show that it is more the work of man, than the work of God.

It is often the case, that men in too great zeal, use means which are better calculated to destroy, than to effect the object they have in view; and this seems to be the case in the employment of these lay preachers. While we rejoice to see that the object will be frustrated, by the means employed to effect it; yet we cannot but deprecate the consequences likely to attend it; the destruction in the mind, of that respect and influence, absolutely necessary to render the gospel ministry useful and salutary.

I ask those who profess to be the servants of God, and the ministers of Christ, to pause one moment, and reflect on what they are doing. I ask, gentlemen, are you not virtually saying to the people, you are not competent to the duties belonging to you as gospel ministers; that although in some towns there are two, three, four, or more of you, and in others it is easy for you frequently to meet; yet you cannot perform the necessary and important duties of your station. Either, gentlemen, you cannot, or you are too negligent and indolent to do your duty, and therefore you are under the necessity of encouraging and employing these lay preachers.

I ask you, gentlemen, if you have a proper reverence and respect for the ministerial character, to look, for your own sakes, and the good of future generations, at the obloquy and reproach you are bringing upon it. Shall it be said, that after all your studies in preparing for the ministry, and the experience of some of you from many year's preaching, still you are unable to produce a **REVIVAL**? Look, I beseech you, at the means you often employ. Young men, who have never had the means or opportunities of obtaining an education—men, who have not paid any attention to the study of the scriptures—who can scarcely recite a passage correctly—men, whose minds, a few weeks ago, were aroused, and their passions excited,

by what is called conversion—who because they can speak vehemently—tell a great deal about the wrath of God, death, damnation, &c.—who can roll up their eyes, and lift up their hands in solemn appeals to the Deity—are at once taken from the work bench, and sent out to convert sinners, while they possess neither the good manners belonging to the gentleman, nor the meekness and humility of the christian.

You gentlemen have much to say about a learned and competent ministry. What, then, must your parishioners think, when they see you suffering the unlearned and inexperienced to take the lead in your meetings? Nay, introduced to effect what you cannot, and who, in their zeal, and pride of heart, often treat your people with disrespect. Will not the reflecting and discerning mind, begin to lose all respect and reverence for the ministerial character, and for **THAT LEARNED COMPETENCY**, when he sees his minister whom he has assisted to settle, and whom he has cheerfully supported, now suffering him, and his children—to be worked upon by an unlearned youth, and doomed to hell, and eternal burnings without mercy, if they do not yield obedience to the dogmas of this lay preacher. You cannot expect men will wilfully shut their eyes to these things. This is an era of light and reflection, and if you persist in these things you will only hasten your own downfall.

#### FROM THE GOSPEL HERALD.

Robert Barkeley instances a few of the many passages and sayings of the first Reformers, upon the doctrine of Calvinism and Reprobation.

Calvin says, in his Institutes, "I say, that by the ordination and will of God, Adam fell. God would have man to fall. Man is blinded by the will and commandment of God. We refer the causes of hardening us, to God. The first and remote cause of hardening, is the will of God. It followeth, that the hidden counsel of God, is the cause of hardening." The above are Calvin's expressions.

"God," says Beza, "hath predestinated, not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it, whosoever he saw meet. The decree of God cannot be excluded from the causes of corruption."

"It is certain," saith Zanchius, "that God is the first cause of obduracy. Reprobates are held so fast under God's almighty decree, that they cannot but sin and perish."

"It is the opinion," saith Paraves, "of our Doctors, that God did inevitably decree the temptation and fall of man. The creature sinneth indeed necessarily, by the most just judgement of God. Our men do most rightly affirm, that the fall of man was necessary and inevitable. By accident, because of God's decree."

"God," saith Martyr, "doth incline and force the wills of wicked men into great sins."

"God, (saith Zwinglius,) moveth the robber to kill: he killeth, God forcing him thereunto. But thou wilt say, He is forced to sin. I permit truly that he is forced."

"Reprobate persons, (says Pitcairn,) are absolutely ordained to this two-fold end; to undergo everlasting punishment, and necessarily to sin: and therefore to sin, that they may be justly punished."

The above is from Robert Barkley's Apology, page 113. He further remarks, That if these sayings do not evidently import that God is the author of sin, we must not seek these men's opinions from their words, but some other way.

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